

10/15/12 - Monday, October 15, 2012



**CITY OF EAU CLAIRE
PLAN COMMISSION MINUTES
Meeting of October 15, 2012**

City Hall, Council Chambers, 7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Messrs. Kayser, Duax, Weld, Hibbard, Larson, Pearson, Strobel; Mdms. Ebert, Mitchell

Staff Present: Messrs. Tufte, Ivory, Noel, Genskow, Ms. Noland

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Kayser.

1. REZONING (Z-1511-12) – Text Amendment, P-Public Zone Notice

Mr. Tufte presented a Plan Commission request to amend the Zoning Code to add provisions for public hearing requirements in the P-Public District for public projects with a "physical change". The new provisions would require public hearings for site plan applications within P-Public zoning. A Class 1 notice and a 175' mailing notice to nearby property owners would be required. An applicant fee would be required to cover the costs of the public hearing notices. City Council review would follow one week after the commission review. The new requirement should help the public to be better informed.

Mr. Hibbard moved to recommend the rezoning text amendment, adding some sentence structure changes. Mr. Pearson seconded and the motion carried.

2. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2013-2017 – City of Eau Claire

Ms. Noland presented excerpts from the City's new Capital Improvement Plan relevant to the Plan Commission's review. The five-year plan has \$179 million slated for projects, with over \$110 million going towards maintaining existing infrastructure. One large project has \$49 million for upgrades to the City's Waste Water Treatment plant to extend its life for another 40 years. Other projects were noted, such as studying a railroad quiet zone, South Barstow Street TID and West Bank District redevelopment, three new hybrid buses, and a future transfer bus center.

Ms. Mitchell moved to recommend approval of the 2013-2017 Capital Improvement Plan considering it consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Ebert seconded and the motion carried.

3. SITE PLAN (SP-1234) – Atrium Sign Plan, Master Sign Plan

Mr. Ivory presented a request to approve a master sign plan for the Atrium office building at 1101 W. Clairemont Avenue. The multi-tenant building has three entrances; one to the north, one to the south, and a main entrance on the east. The main ground directory sign is located on the north side of the building. Two illuminated business wall signs are installed currently on the building near their respective tenant. There is also a poster panel on site. There is no approved master sign plan to coordinate overall signage. A proposed 3'x8' non-illuminated wall sign displaying the words "Hoffman Construction" with a logo is before the commission for review. The applicant has stated that there are no other signs envisioned for the building's other tenants. The proposed sign is flat-paneled aluminum and meets the dimensional standards.

However, staff believes the sign is not consistent with the style and design of the two existing business wall signs (size and illumination). Further, adding more wall signage is not consistent with the original signing intent for the building. Options such as a directory sign or a sign matching the "Life Like" sign were discussed, but no consensus was reached and these options were not proposed in this application.

The applicant was not present and no members from the public spoke in favor or in opposition.

Commissioners discussed that the proposed sign did not reflect consideration of the total existing signage on the building. Instead, they would have liked to see a master sign plan submitted rather than a request for an individual sign.

Mr. Hibbard moved to deny the site plan application because a master sign plan was not submitted. Mr. Duax second and motion passed.

4. SITE PLAN (SP-1235) – Amend Oakwood Mall Master Sign Plan

Mr. Ivory presented a request to amend the master sign plan for Oakwood Mall for an identification sign on the front of the mall's new main entrance. The sign is 22'x14'6" with individual lighted letters reading "Oakwood Mall". The existing master sign plan does not contain provision for a second identification mall sign. When the master sign plan was approved, mall representatives were fine with removing the existing front entrance identification wall sign in order to allow two private retail wall signs on either side of the main entrance. Mall representatives feel now that they need the identification sign again.

Betsy Maher, General Manager for Oakwood Mall at 4800 Golf Road, stated they decided to add back an identification entrance sign so people will know where to enter, since the two side entrances are now signed for Ulta Beauty and Carmike Cinemas. It can be confusing for where patrons should enter.

Some commissioners discussed that Oakwood Mall decided they did not need this identification sign earlier this year. They exchange it for private business advertising but now they feel they need it again because people are confused on where they should enter.

Mr. Pearson motioned to approve the site plan master sign plan amendment. Mr. Weld seconded and the motion carried. Mr. Kayser voted nay.

5. DISCUSSION/DIRECTION

A. Health Chapter Update

Mr. Noel gave the commission an update on the chapter's development. The educational meeting was well attended. Advisory Committee members and the public submitted survey comments on issues or strengths they saw in their neighborhood as it related to human health in the built environment. These survey results were shared along with Eau Claire Community Health Needs Assessment results. The next meeting will be October 18th where the chapter's issues will be framed and discussed.

B. Project Starts

Mr. Tufte discussed with the commission concern over applicants starting projects before commission approval. Case in point was L.E. Phillips Senior Center cleared homes prior to a conditional use permit being approved for off-site parking. They went ahead with notice that their project might not be approved, since they had concern over the upcoming winter weather.

The Plan Commission warned applicants that this practice is not recommended and applicants should not test the commission that automatic approval for projects will be granted. Applicants that choose to move ahead do so at their own risk.

C. Code Compliance Items

None.

D. Future Agenda Items

Mr. Duax asked that a discussion item be placed on a future agenda concerning the 175' radius notice. He also stated it would be good for the commission to review how public notices are written so that the public knows what the expectations are about projects. He said it benefits everyone when there is good communication, and other methods should be considered such as on-site public notice signs.

6. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of October 1, 2012, were approved.

Tom Pearson
Secretary